Reforming NATO's partnerships

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Reforming NATO's Partnerships

Since 1994, NATO has created partnerships as an institutional framework for its relations with countries that cannot or do not want to become Alliance members. In the past 20 years, the circle of countries involved has become ever larger, the associated agenda ever more heterogeneous, and the goals pursued by NATO ever more diverse. The institutional proliferation of partnerships contrasts increasingly with what is potentially expected of them. The existing formats are now overdue for an effectiveness check so that they can be prioritised politically.

The *Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council* (EAPC) groups together twelve post-Soviet states, among others. NATO has supported them in reforming their respective security sectors in line with western standards and bringing them closer to the Alliance. The forum also includes Austria, Finland, Ireland and Sweden, non-allied states that need no assistance with their domestic transformation. What matters to them is the security cooperation with NATO.

The countries of the *Mediterranean Dialogue* (MD) – Egypt, Algeria, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Mauretania and Tunisia – were meant to receive NATO support primarily for cooperating with each other on security policy. In turn, this was intended to contribute to regional security. For a number of political reasons, however, the Dialogue has been only a limited success. The *Istanbul Cooperation Initiative* (ICI), which aspired to intra-regional cooperation between Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, has likewise limped along. Saudi Arabia and Oman have been invited to join this forum, but have so far stood apart.

Finally, there is *Partners across the Globe* (PATG), consisting of countries that, for various reasons, are strategically important to NATO or have extensively contributed to its operations: Afghanistan, Australia, Iraq, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan and South Korea. Alongside this, there are consultations with India and China that to date have been informal. Special committees that handle relations with Georgia, Russia and the Ukraine – all of which are already members of the EAPC – complete the partnership picture. Finally, NATO's summit in 2014 created further partnership formats in the *Partnership Interoperability Initiative* (PII) and the *Defence and related Security Capacity*

Building Initiative (DCB), whose functions overlap to some extent with already existing formats.

Most recently, two developments have attracted sustained attention to the NATO partnerships. First, NATO's transformative potential and its experience in reforming national security sectors seem to be transferable to other regions. Such was the hope expressed during the wave of transformations in North Africa and the Middle East in 2011, as well as for Ukraine and Georgia. Current efforts to support Tunisia in reforming its security policy underline this approach.

Second, for political and financial reasons, NATO will only be able or willing to carry out fewer crisis-management operations in the coming years than to date. However, crises and conflicts necessitating a NATO intervention can still be expected to occur on the Euro-Atlantic periphery. It is likely to be the rule, rather than the exception, that such operations will be jointly planned and carried out with partners from outside the Alliance. Only a few years ago, this would have applied exclusively to international crisis management; given the crisis in the Euro-Atlantic security order, however, it could now also be the case in collective defence.

Against this backdrop, NATO will need to reorganise its partnership policy. This should be based on a shared idea of how to order political priorities and institutional forms of cooperation, even though political considerations may differ greatly from case to case. The study is intended to contribute to this reorganisation process by analysing two key questions:

a) What priorities should NATO members set in designing the partnership formats, given the most recent developments in the security environment? Should the focus be on transforming partner countries, or on their security cooperation with each other, or on "strengthening" them according to the Alliance's terms? Should the level of cooperation be measured in terms of the operative usefulness to NATO or the Alliance's potential influence in a specific region?

b) What institutional formats can be derived from these priorities? A whole spectrum of reorganisation models can be imagined. NATO members could keep the existing structure unchanged because they assume that it is logical to use different formats for different security policy interests. Or else they might discard the current formats to make room for a complete restructuring.

NATO's Partnership Formats: How an International Security Institution Adapts

A large number of academic studies addressing NATO's development since the end of the East-West conflict have analysed its institutional form from a conceptual perspective. Their main point of discussion tends to be the reasons behind NATO's continued existence and behind its largely unchanged, core institutional characteristics. After all, the Alliance's key task of guaranteeing collective defence greatly lost in importance after 1990/1991, becoming a merely residual function – at least until the Russia-Ukraine conflict erupted in 2014. This school of research chiefly focuses on NATO's institutional continuity in the face of the changes that have occurred in the international system.[1]

This study takes the opposite approach. It examines NATO's capacity for adapting its institutions to the changed international security parameters. It uses a concrete example: the partnership formats that have become increasingly differentiated both regionally and functionally since the 1990s.[2] Research into the way international security organisations change, or rather adapt, shows that a series of factors determines whether new security formats are decided and what specific shape they take.[3]

First, the stages in NATO's development – each of which reflects an additional functionality of the institution – should be interpreted primarily as a reaction to the various changes or new phenomena in international politics. The end of the East-West conflict takes pride of place in this, with all the consequences it has had for the Euro-Atlantic area. There are further elements of international change, however, that have challenged or continue to challenge NATO's ability to adapt as an institution: the Balkan wars of the 1990s (meaning ethnic-national conflicts carried out by military means on European soil); the repercussions of Islamist-inspired transnational terrorism; the fragile states on Europe's periphery; and the wave of transformations among Europe's neighbours during the so-called Arab Spring of 2011. The assumption that these new security challenges will be long-lasting is of primary importance in determing NATO's reaction. NATO members have been prepared to adapt its institutional format only when they were convinced of the profound nature of the change and its significant impact on their own security policies.

Second, current research shows that transformations of international security institutions also express the internal division of power between member states. There is no need to go as far as some observers, who interpret NATO's partnership policy as a direct derivative of the United States' changed global strategy.[4] Given the US's long-standing political hegemony within NATO, however, it is appropriate that the partnership formats should reflect Washington's interests more strongly than those of smaller NATO members, or that these formats were not created against the will of the US government. At this juncture, it remains to be seen what impact the domestic transition that the US has undergone under President Obama will have on the durability and effectiveness of the partnership formats. This transformation goes hand-in-hand with an increased reluctance to shape the global political order.

Third, the key to the permanence of international security institutions lies in their ability to adapt their institutions. Other international organisations have manifestly adapted their institutional form to changed parameters. In the case of the EU, the genesis of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and more

1 Cf., for instance, Andrea Locatelli and Michele Testoni, "Intra-Allied Competition and Alliance Durability: The Case for Promoting a Division of Labour among NATO Allies", *European Security* 18, no. 3 (2009): 345–62; Anthony Forster and William Wallace, "What Is NATO For?", *Survival* 43, no. 4 (2001): 107–22; Robert B. McCalla, "NATO's Persistence after the Cold War", *International Organization* 50, no. 3 (1996): 445–75.

2 Cf. Anand Menon and Jennifer Welsh, "Understanding NATO's Sustainability: The Limits of Institutionalist Theory", in: *Global Governance* 17, no. 1 (2011): 81–94; Celeste A. Wallander, "Institutional Assets and Adaptability: NATO after the Cold War", *International Organization*, 54, no. 4 (2000): 705–35.

3 The following volumes offer as instructive an overview as ever: Helga Haftendorn, Robert O. Keohane and Celeste A. Wallander, eds., *Imperfect Unions. Security Institutions Over Time and Space*, Oxford 1999; Helga Haftendorn and Otto Keck, eds., *Kooperation jenseits von Hegemonie und Bedrohung. Sicherheitsinstitutionen in den internationalen Beziehungen* (Baden-Baden, 1997).

4 For instance, Trine Flockhart, "Changing Partnerships in a Changing World", in *Cooperative Security: NATO's Partnership Policy in a Changing World*, ed. Trine Flockhart, DIIS Report 2014:01 (Kopenhagen, 2014), 17–34 (29ff.).

specifically of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) should be read as a process during which an organisation that was not explicitly founded to externalise security gradually built up institutional capacities for precisely that function. Inversely, institutions can disintegrate because they no longer have any functional added value – such as the Western European Union (WEU). In other cases, they continue to exist formally but are hollowed out functionally by the loss of their members' political support.

Fourth, NATO members had the option of making use of other, already existing institutions – such as the EU or OSCE – in shaping the security policy of the neighbouring regions. In principle, one could even imagine creating entirely new institutions for this purpose. To some extent, that did happen. Research has posited two interconnected explanations of why new foundations are relatively rare or rather why the "rival" institutions were not necessarily to the detriment of NATO. First, the creation of new institutions generates significantly higher costs than the maintenance or adaptation of existing ones. Second, an organisation does not allow itself to become superfluous. Rather, it explores new topics and creates new institutional forms because of the variety of interests of its member states and especially of those actors who are active in the organisation.

Fifth, the process of change concerns not only the form of the institution per se, but also (and especially) NATO's rules of conduct and procedures, which need to be adapted or developed from scratch. Regular consultations suffice to integrate some partners into the Alliance. However, other partner states contributing troop contingents to NATO operations demand to be continuously involved in the corresponding planning sessions. In general, international security institutions like NATO have the ability to adapt to new international parameters, especially through "their regulatory system finding appropriate responses to newly arising security problems and by having at their disposal procedures for regular reciprocal consultations and for adapting their rules."[5] Here, there is reason to assume a connection between the function that the partnership format is expected to perform and the complexity of the body of rules. For example, integrating Australia into the ISAF mission required a great number of very specific NATO procedural rules whereas the participation of Moroccan officers in a NATO Defence College course needed far less coordination and cooperation.

Sixth, the argument of "functional continuity" provides clues as to why the NATO partnership formats have developed. From this perspective, the Alliance should be evaluated as a multi-functional or "hybrid" security institution that fulfils a wide range of functions with different levels of intensity, rather than a one-dimensional system of collective defence (and nothing else). A number of studies have suggested that, already during the East-West conflict, NATO's role was not confined to deterring an attack by the Warsaw Pact. Instead, ideas of security cooperation in the Euro-Atlantic area already played a part. The goal of cooperative security – one of the aims of the partnership formats – is in this perspective a permanent issue of Euro-Atlantic security policy.

This short overview spells out that research has been primarily interested in what drives an institution to adapt to a changed international security environment. Little attention has been paid to the question of how effective the new elements are, and what their relationship is to each other. An international security institution can only be successful if it manages to solve the specific security problem for which it was created, or at least transforms it to such an extent that it no longer poses an acute threat to the participating states. Failing that, there is a risk of "institutional incrustation", meaning that the institution's specific formats of cooperation, while available, are no longer used.

This is the more significant because the effectiveness of NATO's partnerships rests on two assumptions. First, all those involved must agree on what the security problem to be tackled actually is. Second, solving the problem must lie within NATO's power. In other words, the solution must not overlap with the conduct of other international actors or even entirely depend on it. This study will show that the second assumption in particular could (and can) not always be taken for granted in NATO partnership formats, which severely restricts their effectiveness in many areas.

5 Helga Haftendorn, "Sicherheitsinstitutionen in den internationalen Beziehungen. Eine Einführung", in *Kooperation jenseits von Hegemonie und Bedrohung*, ed. Haftendorn and Keck (see note 3): 11–33 (29).

The Four "Waves" of NATO Partnership Formats

Even a cursory glance at NATO's partnerships makes it clear that they are not a group of institutions which have been set up to pursue a package of coherent and clearly formulated political goals. Each is founded on the shared assumption that NATO outreach to non-members and international organisations is good for maintaining security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. However, that is too low a common denominator to ensure a coherent approach to security policy in the respective regions.

The term "partnership format" instead refers to an overarching category of heterogeneous institutions dedicated to coordination and cooperation, which have different raisons d'être and differ in their sphere of participation, degree of institutionalisation and political targets. Since each format was first created, its extent or functions have changed, in some cases significantly; so have NATO's political ambitions associated with them.[6] The way in which the formats have evolved since 1994 thus reflects the Alliance's changing priorities over that period of time. NATO's partnership formats echo crucial security events and major developments in international relations. However, they also reveal adjustments in NATO's self-perception: as an international security organisation that changes because the world around it is in upheaval.

1. Security for Europe: The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and Partnership for Peace

NATO's oldest partnership programme still in existence is the *Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council* (EAPC). It developed in 1997 out of the *North Atlantic Cooperation Council* (NACC), founded in 1991. As a multilateral forum for political dialogue and security cooperation that comprises 50 states (28 NATO members and 22 partner countries), the EAPC is the framework for all forms of cooperation between the Alliance and its partner countries in the Euro-Atlantic area.

NATO views this partnership format as an instrument of cooperative security. In the Council, it discusses with the participating countries topics that are of general security interest, such as crisis management, peace-keeping missions, disarmament and arms control, counterterrorism, WMD proliferation, etc. The EAPC also serves the more specific goal of making a lasting contribution to reforming security policy in the region's countries. This included (and includes) placing individual states' armed forces under the oversight of democratically legitimate parliaments and governments and the justice system; if necessary, reducing the size of those forces without causing political upheavals; and, last but not least, ensuring a separation of responsibilities for internal versus external security.

There was no coherent plan for the establishment of the EAPC, which developed rather by chance. The NACC had been conceived as a relatively small format for the then 16 NATO and seven Warsaw Pact members. Later, the dissolution of the Soviet Union "imposed" on NATO much broader and more extensive cooperation than originally planned. There can be no question here of a strategically thought-out partnership policy from the start. Not least, this can be seen in the fact that Russia and Ukraine are members of the EAPC, while also enjoying independent bilateral partnerships with the Alliance. Those formats are far more important politically: the NATO Russia Council, which has existed since 2002, and the NATO Ukraine Commission, created in 1997.

The programme *Partnership for Peace* (PfP) fulfils a similar function to the EAPC although NATO does not explicitly run it as a separate partnership format, but as a subdivision of the EAPC. The format, created in 1994, offers states a framework for individually tailored cooperation programmes with NATO. Such programmes can focus on quite different areas: reforming the defence sector, defence planning, civilian-military relations, education and training, joint manoeuvres, disaster relief, and more.

Thr PfP programme is primarily bilateral, i.e. aimed at the cooperation of individual countries with NATO.

6 On this point, cf. Sten Rynning, "Why Connect? On the Conceptual Foundations of NATO Partnerships", in *Managing Change. NATO's Partnerships and Deterrence in a Globalised World*, ed. Riccardo Alcaro and Sonia Lucarelli (Norfolk, Bologna and Rome, 2011): II-5–II-8.

Its intended outcome, however, is to safeguard security in the entire Euro-Atlantic area. To this end, the Alliance strives to familiarise the 22 PfP partners with its procedures, make the defence planning of the individual states more transparent, and improve security cooperation in general. Alongside these functions, the programme's main purpose is to provide European states pursuing a policy of neutrality or non-alignment – such as Switzerland, Ireland, Austria, Finland and Sweden – an opportunity for extended cooperation with NATO.[7] Since the NATO foreign ministers' meeting in Berlin in April 2011, all programmes and action plans of the PfP format have also been available to other NATO partner countries. They are listed in the so-called *Partnership Cooperation Menu*, which consists of almost 1,600 activities.

The EAPC and PfP have never explicitly been identified as institutions that prepare countries for full NATO membership. Their functional proximity to NATO's policy of expansion in Central Eastern Europe was nevertheless obvious. The goal of the partnership frameworks for the Euro-Atlantic area was to bring about different levels of rapprochement between NATO and the states in Central Eastern Europe as well as the former Soviet Union. This was intended to transform their security and defence policies and thus guarantee stability and security beyond the NATO membership circle.[8] Implicitly, NATO's policy was not only self-interested, but also had a value dimension, insofar as its medium and long-term goal was to transform these states in line with western political conceptions.

NATO's 2010 strategic concept once again placed both the EAPC and the PfP in a context of cooperative security: "The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and Partnership for Peace are central to our vision of Europe whole, free and in peace."[9] However, seeing that the Euro-Atlantic security order entered into a state of crisis after the Russian Federation's annexation of Crimea, the reverse is true as well. While Europe appears divided again and is no longer at peace with itself, the impact of the two partnership tools also remains limited.

This fundamentally affects the Alliance's self-image. Long before the annexation of Crimea and the destabilisation of eastern Ukraine, the transformative impulse that had guided NATO in shaping Euro-Atlantic security since 1990 began to flag in the face of Moscow's changed politics. In NATO's capitals, it was the war in Georgia (2008) that finally gave geopolitical considerations the upper hand over the goal of further transforming the post-Soviet space. For as long as it remains impossible to return to the principles of the Paris Charter, neither the EAPC nor PfP will be able to have an impact as partnership frameworks.

2. Confidence-building and intra-regional cooperation: The Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative

In addition to the two partnership frameworks that target the states of Central Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet region, NATO launched the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) in 1994. The states participating in the forum are Egypt, Algeria (since 2000), Israel, Jordan (since 1995), Morocco, Mauretania and Tunisia. The aim of the framework is to boost security and stability in the Mediterranean region and dismantle wariness of NATO. It makes possible consultations and cooperation between NATO and individual MD partners as well as in the NATO+7 format, i.e. jointly with all participating states.

The political inspiration for the MD format were the so-called Oslo Accords of 1993, i.e. the autonomy agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, which were augmented by a multilateral strand of the Madrid Middle East Peace process. The latter concentrated on topics of regional cross-border relevance such as environmental issues, economic development and security. Not least, the negotiations were intended to serve as a confidence-building measure to contribute to normalising relations between the states of the Middle East. This intra-regional security cooperation in the Mediterranean countries was supported by NATO.

In its early days, however, the MD received little attention. It barely rose above the status of a "diplomatic talking shop". Only the attacks of 11 September 2001 raised the interest of NATO members in the Alliance's southern flank. At the 2002 NATO Summit

7 On this point, cf. Andrew Cottey, "The European Neutrals and NATO: Ambiguous Partnership", *Contemporary Security Policy* 34, no. 3 (2013): 446–72; and Magnus Petersson, "NATO and the EU 'Neutrals' – Instrumental or Value-oriented Utility?", in *NATO: The Power of Partnerships*, ed. Håkan Edström, Janne Haaland Matlary and Magnus Petersson (New York, 2011): 112–30.
8 Flockhart appropriately calls it the "integrationalist rationale" of this wave of expansions. Cf. Flockhart, "Changing Partnerships in a Changing World" (see note 4), 27f.
9 *Active Engagement, Modern Defence. Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation*, adopted by heads of state and government in Lisbon, Paragraph 35, http://www.nato.diplo.de/contentblob/2970688/Daten/971427/strat_Konzept_Lisboa_DLD.pdf (accessed 25 May 2016).

in Prague, the Alliance finally integrated the MD into the set of already existing partnership frameworks.[10] Since then, security and stability in the Mediterranean region have been considered decisive for the security of the NATO area, whether in the context of transnational terrorism, WMD proliferation, energy security or managing migration.[11] From the perspective of its contributions to NATO operations, the MD is of minor importance – Jordan was the only partner nation to participate in the ISAF mission, for example, and then only with a relatively small contingent.

Two factors have been limiting the effectiveness of the MD. First, the forum consists of a very heterogeneous group of North African and Middle Eastern states, with little to link them in terms of security policy. To name just three examples: Tunisia is interested in reforming the defence sector; Jordan wishes to cooperate with NATO in the context of Islamic State's advances; and Israel is preoccupied with exchanging with NATO on missile defence. Against this backdrop, NATO has repeatedly considered dividing the MD into two regional subgroups: one for the Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco, Mauretania and Tunisia) and one for the Mashriq (Egypt, Israel, Jordan).[12] In 2008, the NATO states who are also members of the EU created the Euro-Mediterranean partnership (EUROMED), an instrument which theoretically complements the MD but actually competes with it, and which has been undermining any serious and exclusive international security focus on the MD.[13]

At the 2004 NATO Summit, the *Istanbul Cooperation Initiative* (ICI) was added to the mix. It pools NATO's relations with Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. This format was (and is) likewise based on the assumption that international security challenges in the Arab Persian Gulf can also have indirect consequences for the security of NATO states and that they should be jointly solved, i.e. together with the ICI partner nations. Reflections focused above all on growing concerns about a proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and on fighting transnational terrorism.[14]

As in the MD, ICI partners also have the opportunity of choosing between bilateral and multilateral cooperation. So far, however, the ICI has been insufficiently multilateralised, and has thus not developed into a true regional security forum. This is primarily due to the non-involvement of Saudi Arabia and Oman, which are responsible for over half of the total defence expenditure of all the region's states. Other countries in the Arab Persian Gulf are in fact looking to cooperate with NATO, but their understanding of security interests is primarily national. Individual ICI partners have even made it plain that they are less interested in good relations with NATO per se than in relations with selected Alliance members, principally the United States, Great Britain and France.[15]

This reflects the nature of the regional order, which has been shaped as much by the Saudi-Iranian power struggle as by the general willingness to resort to the use of military force. It also shows that the region gives primacy to bilateral security policies over organising collective defence or collective security. This is shown not least in the great number of individual security agreements that the region's states have concluded with external actors.[16]

NATO is currently considering building an institutionalised partnership with the Gulf Cooperation

10 Cf. Mohammed Moustafa Orfy, *NATO and the Middle East. The Geopolitical Context post-9/11*, Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics, 30 (London, 2011), 109ff.; and Sten Rynning, "NATO and the Broader Middle East, 1949–2007: The History and Lessons of Controversial Encounters", *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 6 (2007): 905–27 (919ff.).

11 On the increased importance of the Mediterranean region for NATO, cf. Costanza Musu, "NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue: More than Just an Empty Shell?", *Mediterranean Politics* 11, no. 3 (2006): 419–24 (419f.); and Philip H. Gordon, *NATO's Growing Role in the Greater Middle East*, ECSSR – Emirates Lecture Series, 63 (Abu Dhabi, 2006), 3ff.

12 Cf. Pierre Razoux, *How to Revitalize the Dialogue between NATO and the Maghreb Countries*, NATO Defense College Research Paper, 64 (Rome, 2010), 2f.

13 On the dangers of an institutional "overload" in the Mediterranean region, cf. Massimo Ambrosetti, "NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue", *The International Spectator* 36, no. 14 (2001): 83–89 (87f.).

14 Cf. the declaration of the Istanbul Summit: "Istanbul Cooperation Initiative", NATO Policy Document, http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2004/06-istanbul/docu-cooperation.htm (accessed 19 May 2016); on the areas of practical cooperation, see NATO's "ICI Fact Sheet" of April 2014 at http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2014_04/20140331_140401-factsheet-ICI_en.pdf (accessed 19 May 2016). See also the speech by the NATO Deputy Secretary-General Alexander Vershbow in Doha on 2 May 2015, "Preventing WMD Proliferation: NATO's Engagement with its Global Partners", http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_117732.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed 19 May 2016).

15 Cf. Bilal Y. Saab, "Friends with Benefits. What the UAE Really Wants from NATO", *Foreign Affairs Snapshot*, 14 August 2014, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2014-08-14/friends-benefits (accessed 19 May 2016).

16 On this issue, cf. Erik Reichborn-Kjennerud, *NATO in the 'New' MENA Region. Competing Priorities amidst Diverging Interests and Financial Austerity*, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs – Security in Practice, 1/2013 (Oslo, 2013), 20; Jean-Loup Samaan, *NATO in the Gulf: Partnership without a Cause?*, NATO Defense College Research Paper, 83 (Rome, 2012), 5f.

Council (GCC); any actual agreement, however, is still in the distant future. Brussels sees the GCC as a potential partner in the task of guaranteeing regional security on the Alliance's southern flank.[17] NATO's growing interest in more extensive cooperation is also based on the GCC's declared intention of becoming an independent collective-defence organisation with integrated military capabilities. The NATO visit by GCC Secretary General Abdul Latif Al Zayani in March 2016 served the goal of improving mutual relations.

The transformative drive, which has been characterising the EAPC, is largely missing for the Mediterranean region and the Arab Persian Gulf, i.e. both in the MD and in the ICI. In both forums, NATO's collaboration with the partner countries is intended to familiarise them with Alliance procedures. However, the partnerships focus more on cooperation with the countries than on their potential transformation, let alone embedding them in the Euro-Atlantic order. Thus, a shared value base or possible NATO membership for individual partner nations effectively have no role to play, even though policy advisors do bring up these prospects every now and again.[18] As a result, expectations that NATO might contribute to the democratisation of North African and Middle Eastern states by supporting reform of the defence sector remain unfulfilled.

The aftermath of the so-called Arab Spring – the wave of protests and revolutions against authoritarian regimes and political and social conditions that swept through various Middle Eastern and North African states (including Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria) from December 2010 onwards – strikingly illustrated the limitations of this approach. Following the uprisings, established power structures were ultimately restored. The Alliance was hence unable to contribute to any lasting transformation of these countries' security or defence policies, in sharp contrast to its achievements in Central Eastern Europe (if under different conditions). The only exception merely confirms the rule: since summer 2015, NATO has made cautious efforts to accompany Tunisia in transforming its security policy.[19] In January 2016, urged on by Spain, France and Italy, NATO's Military Committee consulted on an appropriate package of measures for Tunis. To date, however, the Tunisian government seems unwilling to make open use of Alliance support, preferring bilateral cooperation with individual NATO members.

The Alliance's partnership activities played no part in the efforts to (militarily) contain the Syrian civil war, fight Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, or build up effective Iraqi security forces – apart from the largely unsuccessful *NATO Training Mission-Iraq* (NTM-I, 2004–2011).[20] In April 2016, NATO followed up on the NTM-I to a limited extent by financing the training of 350 Iraqi officers in Jordan.[21] Both of NATO's other Mediterranean missions are preventative in nature and more an expression of political solidarity than of military stabilisation.

Operation Active Fence aims to protect Turkey from attacks launched from within the neighbouring country of Syria, torn by civil war. The goal of the maritime *Operation Active Endeavour*, which ran from 2001 until 2016, was to contribute to the discovery and deterrence of terrorist activities in the Mediterranean region.[22] However, the two missions have hardly been a statement of NATO's ability to stabilise North Africa or the Middle East, or of its legitimacy there as an international security institution.

It is hard to discern whether and to what extent the joint fight against Islamic State might be a catalyst for improving cooperation between NATO and its Middle Eastern partner countries within the MD or ICI frameworks. In a speech to those states in December 2014, the then-NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen

17 Cf., on this point, Christopher S. Chivvis, "NATO's Southern Exposure. The Real Threats to Europe – and the Alliance", *Foreign Affairs Snapshot*, 17 April 2016, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-04-17/nato-s-southern-exposure (accessed 19 May 2016); and, on ideas for how Middle Eastern and North African states could shoulder some of NATO's operative burden: Sally Khalifa Isaac, *NATO and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Security: Prospects for Burden Sharing*, NATO Defense College Forum Paper, 16 (Rome, 2011).

18 These deliberations mostly concerned Israel. Cf., most recently, Shlomo Ben Ami, "Israel and NATO – Between Membership and Partnership". A Working Paper in Preparation for the Herzliya Conference 2010, http://www.herzliya conference.org/_Uploads/3045israelNATO.pdf (accessed 19 May 2016); and Josef Joffe, "Israel and NATO: A Good Idea Whose Time Will Never Come", BESA Center Perspectives Papers, 77 (Ramat Gan, 2009), http://besacenter.org/perspectives-papers/israel-and-nato-a-good-idea-whose-time-will-never-come/ (accessed 25 May 2016).

19 Two high-ranking visits in the past year served this goal: Thrasyvoulos Terry Stamatopoulos, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy, travelled to Tunis in June 2015; in September, the Tunisian Foreign Minister Taieb Baccouche in turn visited NATO Headquarters in Brussels.

20 On the track record of the NTM-I, cf. Florence Gaub, *Against all Odds: Relations between NATO and the MENA Region* (Carlisle, PA: United States Army War College – Strategic Studies Institute, August 2012), 13ff.

21 Cf. *European Diplomacy & Defense*, no. 878 (2016): 2.

22 Cf. Dieter Stockfisch, "NATO-Operation 'Active Endeavour' im Mittelmeer", *Europäische Sicherheit & Technik* 63, no. 4 (2014): 52ff.

did emphasise the shared threat perception and the Alliance's efforts towards capacity-building and military cooperation. The fact that the MD countries have been integrated into the regular consultations with the NATO chief of staff since January 2016 points in the same direction.[23] However, for as long as NATO as an institution does not play any part in fighting IS, these efforts will yield only limited results.

3. Contributions to NATO operations: Partners across the Globe

The third "wave" of NATO partnerships began in a relatively small way as long ago as the 1990s, with the Alliance's operations in the Balkans, in which Argentina[24] and China participated. These formats, however, were selective, short-lived and little shaped by political considerations. It was not until NATO took over control of the *International Security Assistance Force* (ISAF) in Afghanistan in August 2003 that considerations about the operative integration of partners became politically decisive. The ISAF operation – the Alliance's longest and most extensive to date – significantly changed the status of partner countries and the expectations placed on them. Time and again, NATO representatives emphasised that ISAF was not just a mission by its 28 member states, but one in which over 50 countries had participated in some form or other. These statements were driven as much by an attempt to provide greater legitimacy for NATO's own actions as by the endeavour to gain additional military capabilities. The Alliance cultivated a new perspective on partnerships with this far-reaching integration of non-members into the ISAF mission. Since, the Alliance no longer evaluates partnership formats solely on the basis of what it can do for its partners, but also in the light of what partners can do for it: in other words, what real military contributions they can make to ongoing operations.[25]

NATO's goal is to establish lasting connections with non-members that have substantial military capabilities and are willing to deploy them within NATO operations. At the same time, it wants to preserve and harness for future deployments any experiences already made in the area of what is known as interoperability. Future missions could be in highly unstable conflict zones, but also to fight piracy, defend against cyber-threats, etc. This "operational" rationale behind partnerships is primarily based on NATO's self-interests in maintaining, extending and improving its military capabilities. It became the case from the 1990s onwards, when NATO's operations were increasingly geographically remote from the Alliance area and took place within new security contexts. NATO is not nearly in a position to act as a provider of global security either through its membership structure or its operations.[26] At the same time, however, its assertions of political order have long exceeded the Euro-Atlantic space. From this perspective, the global partnerships are an almost inescapable consequence of the globalisation of security challenges and the geographical extension of NATO's operational area that results from it.

The very nature of the Alliance, however, has been changed by the expectations placed on partners and the fact that their contributions have become a firm part of NATO planning. The integration of partner countries into NATO operations consolidates a development that has been noticeable for some time. NATO operations outside the Alliance area are still subject to unanimous approval in the North Atlantic Council by all 28 members. However, for a variety of political reasons, ever fewer NATO members take part in implementing the decisions. Instead, the Alliance is transforming into a sort of "operative platform", whose missions are also open to partner countries depending on the kind of operation, region and military requirement. The 2011 mission in Libya, *Operation Unified Protector*, exemplified this development. It saw the participation of the partner nations of Jordan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Sweden alongside 14 NATO members.[27] In light of the limited defence budgets of NATO countries and the evident reservations in many NATO capitals about participating in further crisis-management operations, this looks like a development that will be hard to reverse in coming years. To that

23 Cf. *European Diplomacy & Defense*, no. 855 (2015): 5.

24 Cf., on this point, Federico Merke, "Political and Military Utility of NATO for Argentina", in *NATO: The Power of Partnerships*, ed. Edström, Matlary and Petersson (see note 7): 181–208 (185f.).

25 On this paradigm shift, cf. Rebecca R. Moore, "Lisbon and the Evolution of NATO's New Partnership Policy", in *Perceptions* 17, no. 1 (2012): 55–74.

26 On this older debate, cf. Tobias Bunde and Timo Noetzel, "Unavoidable Tensions: The Liberal Path to Global NATO", *Contemporary Security Policy* 31, no. 2 (2010): 295–318; and Thomas S. Mowle and David H. Sacko, "Global NATO: Bandwagoning in a Unipolar World", *Contemporary Security Policy* 28, no. 3 (2007): 597–618.

27 Cf. Fredrik Doeser, "Sweden's Participation in Operation Unified Protector: Obligations and Interests", *International Peacekeeping* 21, no. 5 (2014): 642–57.

extent, this dimension of the partnership policy also has repercussions for NATO itself. Since the integration into NATO operations of partner countries – or rather of their military capacities – is becoming the rule, it is now easier for NATO members not to take part in certain missions at all. In the long term, this trend threatens to create an "Alliance à la carte".[28]

In the *Partners across the Globe* (PATG) framework, NATO categorises a handful of countries so as to underline their special status. They are Afghanistan, Australia, Iraq, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan and South Korea. However, two of these countries – Afghanistan and Iraq – fall outside of the outlined operative logic since their own fragile security situation raises substantial doubts about their ability to contribute to future NATO operations at all, and if so, to which areas. Rather, their inclusion expresses NATO's continued determination to assign them a prominent – though not explicitly formulated – status in its security policy, a status that is the equivalent of the "strategic partnership" in other foreign-policy contexts.

In terms of their function, the PATG are nothing new. They are a cross-sectional category, or rather an additional format for those countries that do not belong to the formalised partnership frameworks already mentioned. As pointed out above, in the past few years countries from other partnership frameworks have also taken part in NATO operations and in certain cases provided substantial contingents: especially the neutral European states in the EAPC, Jordan (MD), and Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (ICI).

NATO cooperates with the PATG countries on an individual basis. The partner nations independently decide on the particular areas in which they want to increase their cooperation with the Alliance. In 1998, NATO had already loosely grouped these states together as Contact Countries. Since then, they have had a standing invitation to participate in the Alliance's activities – not only its operations, but also its exercises and conferences. The framework for the outlined operative dimension was created at the NATO Summit in Riga in 2006. In so doing, the meeting underlined a facet of the global partnerships that is often overlooked because of the predominance of security issues: their value dimension. The Alliance's aim is to construct a form of cooperation that is not only guided by shared security interests, but also based on a consensus on political principles such as democracy, the rule of law and human-rights protection. It is self-evident that this aspiration comes up against the limits of the actual partnership formats and restricts their effectiveness.[29]

Since 2011, in accordance with the decisions of the Lisbon Summit and the foreign ministers' meeting in Berlin, the PATG nations have had access to the same partnership instruments as partners from other formats.[30] Forms of cooperation range from joint exercises and operations to collaborating on training issues and information exchange between the intelligence services. Yearly *Individual Tailored Cooperation Packages of Activities* complement these projects.

The PATG countries take part on an equal footing in the military planning sessions for individual operations. The responsibility for this lies with liaison officers at the appropriate committees in Brussels and at *Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe* (SHAPE). Partner countries also participate in NATO members' political meetings, as can be seen from the sessions of heads of state and government as part of the NATO summits of the past few years.[31] Building on this, individual PATG nations have added a political facet to the operative dimension by taking up regular political consultations with NATO. Most have an ambassador in Brussels to represent them. Currently, out of the PATG countries, Australia, Mongolia and New Zealand are especially active in NATO missions. They are partici-

28 Cf. Jakub M. Godzimirski, Nina Græger and Kristin M. Haugevik, *Towards a NATO à la Carte? Assessing the Alliance's Adaptation to New Tasks and Changing Relationships*, NUPI-Report (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs [NUPI], 2010).

29 Cf. the *Riga Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Riga on 29 November 2006*, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_37920.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed 25 May 2016), Para. 12: "we task the Council in Permanent Session to further develop this policy, in particular to: [...] increase the operational relevance of relations with non-NATO countries, including interested Contact Countries; and in particular to strengthen NATO's ability to work with those current and potential contributors to NATO operations and mission, who share our interests and values", http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2006/p06-150e.htm# partnerships (accessed 19 May 2016).

30 Cf. the *Lisbon Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Lisbon on 20 November 2010*, Para. 24–28, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm#partners (accessed 19 May 2016).

31 Cf., as an example, the declaration of the 2014 Summit: *Wales Summit Declaration on Afghanistan. Issued by Heads of State and Government of Allies and their International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Troop Contributing Partners*, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_112517.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed 19 May 2016).

pating in the maritime mission *Operation Ocean Shield* (Australia/New Zealand) – whose goal is to fight piracy around the Horn of Africa – and in the ISAF follow-up mission *Operation Resolute Support* (Australia/Mongolia), which provides education, consultancy and training for Afghan security forces.

Finally, NATO entertains relations with individual states outside of the formalised partnership formats. The political consultations with China,[32] India,[33] Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Colombia are elevated to a higher status than the "normal" relations NATO has with its surroundings by the prominence that the Alliance confers on them. The dominant diplomatic mantra here is that it is always sensible to consult with one another on security matters.[34] On closer inspection, however, one cannot avoid the impression that NATO is more interested in extended relations than the other side.

This mismatch concerns above all the Alliance's activities in South and Southeast Asia, where the rationales for forming partnerships in other contexts do not apply. NATO neither strives to contribute to the internal transformation of the countries in question, nor does it have the means to do so. Given the existing conflicts in the region, there is indeed a need to boost intra-regional security cooperation. For external actors, this is generally a difficult topic, but it is particularly so for NATO, which is not perceived as an "Asian actor". And finally, the countries mentioned have to date been unwilling to deploy contingents on NATO-led operations, thus putting them under its command. This type of cooperation has been limited by questions of national sovereignty as much as a lack of experience of interoperability. Conversely, NATO deliberately keeps its "Asian profile" low to avoid its partnership activities being misunderstood as a taking of sides in the region's conflicts, or even as an informal promise of assistance to one of the parties involved.

4. 2014, the crisis year: Partnerships as a defence against external threats

The first three "waves" of partnerships were founded on the assumption that due to the changed security environment NATO would hardly ever be called upon to provide its traditional core function of collective defence, given the de-facto absence of external threats. Politically, cooperative security became the Alliance's guideline and goal from the early 1990s onwards, in light of the profound transformation of the Euro-Atlantic security order. Militarily, the task of defending the Alliance and its member nations gradually receded into the background as well. A series of indicators elucidates this: the low number or even total absence of relevant Allied military exercises; the lack of military structures for defending Central Europe (such as headquarters or pre-deployment of armaments); and, not least, the decreasing defence budgets in the majority of NATO states. These budget cuts expressed the commonly held assumption that the changed security situation made such investments superfluous. The declining interest in NATO's global military crisis management once the ISAF mission was completed only intensified this trend.[35]

Since then, a fourth wave of NATO's partnership policy has been in evidence. Its circumstances are quite different from the previous three. The Alliance now pursues the intention of strengthening neighbouring non-members. Its immediate aim is to improve and expand these states' military capabilities. Indirectly, NATO hopes to deter external threats to its members' territorial integrity and political sovereignty. In short, its partnership policy is now also being harnessed as a function of collective defence.

This "return" to collective defence was triggered by two factors. First, Russia's revisionist defence policy under President Putin, which has, to date, been most strongly expressed in the annexation of Crimea and Moscow's ongoing policy of destabilising eastern Ukraine. This is no direct concern of NATO's since

32 Cf. Mads Kjeldsen and Friis Arne Petersen, "China and NATO: Room for Partnership?", in *Cooperative Security*, ed. Flockhart (see note 4): 87–98; Tania M. Chacho, "Potential Partners in the Pacific? Mutual Interests and the Sino-NATO Relationship", *The Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 87 (2014): 387–407.

33 Cf. Robert Helbig, *NATO – India: Prospects of a Partnership*, NATO Defense College Research Paper, 73 (Rome, 2012); and David Scott, "NATO and India: The Politics of Strategic Convergence", *International Politics* 49, no. 1 (2012): 98–116.

34 Cf., e.g., Michael Rühle, "Die NATO auf dem Drahtseil", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29 September 2015: "NATO must [...] not let the impression arise that its partners have fulfilled their duty as soon as the joint Afghanistan deployment ends. In the era of globalisation, good relations with other states are an investment that will continue to pay off."

35 Cf., on this point, the annual compilation of NATO members' arms spending, "Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence", at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49198.htm (accessed 19 May 2016); and the relevant SIPRI data sets for the years 1949 to 2014 at http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database (accessed 19 May 2016).

Ukraine is not a member state and will not become one in the foreseeable future either.[36] However, Moscow's approach has intensified pre-existing fears, especially among NATO's Central East European members, that they might become the object of Russian attempts to rearrange the post-Soviet and post-communist space both politically and territorially. In fact, it is questionable whether and to what extent Moscow even continues to feel bound by the principles of the Paris Charter, i.e. the acquis in security policy that forms the normative core of what is usually understood by the Euro-Atlantic security order.[37]

The second factor linking collective-defence issues with NATO's partnership policy are the military advances achieved by Islamic State in Iraq and Syria since 2014, and even more so, the organisation's political and territorial claims beyond those two countries. While IS currently threatens neither the territorial integrity nor the political sovereignty of NATO members, the instability in the region exacerbated by its advances does have an impact on the Alliance. To date, this has shown itself in two ways. The skirmishes between Syrian and Turkish forces in 2012 led to NATO operation Active Fence, whose aim is to protect Turkey from attacks launched from within the neighbouring country torn apart by civil war. Second, Russian military aircraft repeatedly entered Turkish airspace. The situation escalated in November 2015 when Turkey shot down a Russian Su-24 bomber aircraft.

Against this backdrop of enduring instability on NATO's eastern and southeastern flank, the NATO Summit in Wales in 2014 added new forms of cooperation to the already introduced partnership formats. In part, these are at odds with the traditional frameworks; in part they replicate their functions:

a) The goal of the *Partnership Interoperability Initiative* (PII) is to maintain and further enhance the ability of external partners to carry out joint military operations with NATO armed forces. On the one hand, this format perpetuates the aspiration of the *Connected Forces Initiative* (CFI), decided in 2012; on the other hand, it integrates the activities that were already planned within the *Partners across the Globe* framework.[38] To meet these objectives, the defence ministers meeting in Wales created an *Interoperability Platform*, which encompasses 24 partner countries from various, already existing partnership formats.[39] The intention is to improve and advance dialogue and practical cooperation.

Within the PII, the *Enhanced Opportunities Program* (EOP) offers five of the partner countries additional opportunities for cooperation at their request. They are Australia, Finland, Georgia, Jordan and Sweden – countries whose armed forces are considered to be particularly interoperable with NATO's. The options for this prominent form of cooperation have not yet been spelled out in detail. However, individual statements from NATO circles as well as the first concrete measures allow conclusions to be drawn as to what the intensified cooperation might consist of. For example, NATO has assured the EOP countries that they will be able to participate in select manoeuvres. Furthermore, Brussels has designated them in principle as troop-contributing nations for Alliance operations. This also gives them the opportunity of filling NATO military staff positions with their own officers and engaging in extended political dialogue.[40]

For Finland and Sweden, NATO complemented the EOP by concluding bilateral *Host Nation Support Agreements* in September 2014. These allow and regulate the presence of NATO contingents on the two states' territory, for example in the context of joint exercises. The EOP gained a more definite shape on the fringes of the NATO foreign ministers' meeting in December 2015, when NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg discussed mutual exchange of information with the Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström and her Finnish counterpart Timo Soini. The main areas were hybrid warfare, the coordination of national training

36 Cf. Markus Kaim, *Partnership Plus: On the Future of the NATO-Ukraine Relationship*, SWP Comments 28/2014 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, June 2014).
37 On this point, cf. Markus Kaim, Hanns W. Maull and Kirsten Westphal, *The Pan-European Order at the Crossroads: Three Principles for a New Beginning*, SWP Comments 18/2015 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, March 2015).

38 Cf. *Wales Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales*, Para. 88, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm (accessed 19 May 2016). On the CFI, cf. John R. Deni, "Shifting Locus of Governance? The Case of NATO's Connected Forces Initiative", *European Security* 25, no. 2 (2016): 181–96.
39 They are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Australia, Bahrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Georgia, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Macedonia, Moldovia, Mongolia, Montenegro, New Zealand, Austria, Sweden, Switzerland, Serbia, South Korea, Ukraine and the United Arab Emirates.
40 On this point, cf. the article by the American Ambassador to NATO, Douglas Lute, "The Wales Summit: Strengthening NATO Partnerships", 20 November 2014, https://nato.usmission.gov/november-20-2014-the-wales-summit-strengthening-nato-partnerships/ (accessed 25 May 2016).

and exercises, the creation of joint situational awareness – especially in the Baltic area – and possible contributions by the two nations to the *NATO Response Force* (NRF).[41]

The NRF is the Alliance's rapid deployment force, consisting of land, air, sea and special forces. Its troop contingents are registered on a yearly basis by the NATO states, and are then delegated for the corresponding timeframe. Other units take over their functions by rotation. Since the NRF is not an additional unit, but relies on existing forces, any Finnish and Swedish contributions will be relatively straightforward to integrate. The Ukraine crisis and NATO's reaction thereto demonstrated that the NRF – and thus also the contributions of possible partner countries – is significant for collective defence purposes. To be able to react more quickly to such crises, heads of state and government decided at the Wales Summit in September 2014 to establish a *Very High Readiness Joint Task Force* (VJTF) as part of the NRF.[42]

The EOP has also come into focus for Georgia. The *Substantial NATO-Georgia Package* (SNGP), adopted in Wales, comprises a broad range of measures and initiatives in 13 areas. Its objectives are to enhance Georgia's defence capabilities and boost the interoperability of its troops with NATO armed forces.[43] In this context, the *NATO-Georgian Joint Training and Evaluation Centre* (JTEC), opened by Secretary General Stoltenberg on 27 August 2015, is a sort of beacon project.[44]

The EOP membership circle could be expanded in future, should additional qualified countries show an interest. This underlines the programme's principles: while NATO identifies its specific expectations to the participants and thus defines the cornerstones of the partnership, it is above all the partner nations themselves that are expected to specify the political areas in which they want to cooperate more closely with NATO with regard to interoperability.[45]

In the run-up to the 2014 Summit, the designation of individual states as special partners in cooperating with NATO – as sketched out above – was not without controversy. This concerned Finland, Georgia and Sweden in particular. On the one hand, the decision took into account the need for differentiating partners more strongly since – according to proponents – they differed so greatly in their respective degree of closeness to the Alliance. Equal treatment for unequal partner countries in the same category, proponents argued, would have signalled to states such as Finland and Sweden that their specific expectations would not be taken into consideration. A rejection of this sort, it was claimed, could have resulted in Helsinki and Stockholm turning away from NATO, blocking the possibility of improving defence cooperation in Northern Europe.

Critics, on the other hand, objected that Russia might interpret the rapprochement of the two Nordic countries with NATO as a precursor to full membership. That in turn would reduce Moscow's willingness to cooperate, at a time when its cooperation was especially critical in light of the great number of political crises in the world.[46] This argument is even stronger for Georgia, which has an unsolved territorial conflict with Russia. Ever since the Bucharest Summit of 2008 held out the prospect of full membership to Georgia, member states' differences of opinion have continued unabated on how seriously the Alliance should pursue this. The Bucharest compromise reflected the faultline between the NATO states that supported full membership for Georgia (and Ukraine) – primarily the USA – and those, such as France and Germany, which saw the Russian-Georgian tensions as a reason to desist.[47]

41 Cf. *European Diplomacy & Defense*, no. 847 (2015): 4. This agenda was discussed in more detail during a visit to the two countries by General Petr Pavel, chairman of NATO's Military Committee, in April 2016.

42 Cf. Rainer Glatz and Martin Zapfe, *NATO Defence Planning between Wales and Warsaw: Politico-military Challenges of a Credible Assurance against Russia*, SWP Comments 5/2016 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, January 2016), 2ff.

43 For details, cf. "Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP)", NATO Fact Sheet, http://nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_12/20151209_151209-factsheet-nato-georgia-package.pdf (accessed 19 May 2016).

44 See also *European Diplomacy & Defense*, no. 820 (2015): 3f.

45 On the Swedish expectations of the EOP, cf., for example, Anna Wieslander, "NATO Turns Its Gaze to the Baltic Region. Sweden Should Make Wise Use of NATO's Benevolent Attitude to Establish Closer Relations", *euractiv.com*, 18 December 2014, http://www.euractiv.com/sections/security/nato-turns-its-gaze-baltic-region-310962 (accessed 19 May 2016).

46 On this new orientation in Swedish and Finnish security policy, cf. Jannicke Fiskvik, *Nordische Sicherheit: Eine Annäherung an die NATO?*, CSS Analysen zur Sicherheitspolitik no. 189 (Zurich, 2016); Tobias Etzold and Christian Opitz, *Between Military Non-Alignment and Integration. Finland and Sweden in Search of a New Security Strategy*, SWP Comments 25/2015 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, April 2015); Ann-Sofie Dahl, *NORDEFCO and NATO: "Smart Defence" in the North?*, NATO Defense College Research Paper, 101 (Rome, 2014).

47 Cf. the *Bucharest Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008*, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm (accessed 25 May 2016). On Georgia's ambitions, see Tornike Zurabashvili, "Let Georgia

b) The *Defence and related Security Capacity Building Initiative* (DCB) is likewise based on existing NATO activities in capacity-building – the measures which aim to support, advise and assist other countries' armed forces.[48] The DCB is seen as a lasting commitment by the partner countries and as a NATO instrument for projecting stability among its neighbours and beyond, without having to transfer larger combat units of its own. NATO is unmistakeably performing a shift of focus from "security provider" to "security consultant", even though the latter function does not completely replace the former.[49]

The first partner countries in this context are Georgia, Jordan and Moldova. The programme is also open to additional states and regional organisations. Functionally, it is the equivalent of the EU's efforts to guarantee regional security by supporting key states and regional organisations through its *Enable and Enhance Initiative*. The NATO approach corresponds to what is often known in Germany's security policy as the enhancement strategy (*Ertüchtigungsstrategie*). In the past, the security policies and military engagements of many Euro-Atlantic states were aimed at fundamentally redesigning the system of government after a conflict, for instance in the Balkans or Afghanistan. The future will be primarily about a policy of subsidiarity, which enables individual governments or regional organisations to manage security challenges autonomously, and to safeguard peace and international security in accordance with the UN Charter.[50]

Removed from their respective context, the driving forces behind these initiatives are identical. First, the phase of liberal interventionism is over. While in the 1990s and 2000s, the political class and public opinion in the West still had a basically positive attitude to multilateral military interventions, this has now been superseded by intervention fatigue. There is particular scepticism about the goals that such missions might attain. The deployments are often successful in the short term, at least according to military criteria or under the terms of the UN Security Council mandate. It is an entirely different question, however, whether the intended changes in the political order can be realised in the medium or long term. De facto, this resulted (and results) in NATO operations that seem never-ending, or interventions that must essentially be described as political failures soon after their conclusion. The impression of pointlessness is one of the factors that have led to fundamental concerns in many NATO states about military engagements using their own troops.

Second, the multiple, simultaneous crises in the European integration process play an important part. They have shifted the priorities of Euro-Atlantic politics as well. The long-term consequences that these crises might have for the integration process and individual member states (of the EU and NATO) cannot yet be foreseen. However, they have received more attention in the past years than international crisis management. This does not necessarily mean that it is impossible to imagine a situation in which NATO members overcome the domestic political restrictions that result from such a prioritisation. However, it would require substantial political capital.

The changed financial parameters also directly influence the Alliance's actions. In many NATO states, defence budgets will not increase for many years, or only to a limited extent. Many partners will therefore have to reduce their capabilities for participating in international interventions, or lose them entirely. In terms of cooperation among NATO members, the conclusion is to strengthen military integration; in terms of NATO's cooperation with a great many partner countries, it is capacity-building.

The NATO partnership formats: A mixed track record

As was pointed out at the beginning, NATO's partnership formats are a result of changed security parameters, but also an expression of the Alliance's adaptability. Over the past 25 years, it has reacted to the changes in its surroundings. However, this adaptation

https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/georgia/2016-04-12/let-georgia-join-nato (accessed 19 May 2016); Tedo Japaridze, *Georgia and NATO: Perpetual Threshold*, European Leadership Network, 11 May 2016.

48 Cf. *Wales Summit Declaration* (see note 38), Para. 89.

49 This is equally true for NATO and the EU. See the comprehensive treatment by Daniel Göler, "Zwischen *security provider* und *security consultant*. Veränderungen im Leitbild der strategischen Kultur der Europäischen Union", *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 7, no. 3 (2014): 323–42.

50 Cf., on this point, Majid Satar, "Kosten der Ertüchtigung. Deutschland zahlt 100 Millionen Euro an Krisenstaaten", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 20 May 2016; Markus Kaim, "Subsidiäre Ertüchtigung. Auslandseinsätze zu verweigern wäre gefährlich", *Internationale Politik* 70, no. 4 (2015): 94–97; and Marc von Boemcken, "Verantwortung durch Ertüchtigung? Ausbildungshilfe und Waffenlieferungen als Mittel deutscher Außenpolitik", in *Friedensgutachten 2015*, ed. Janet Kursawe, Margret Johannsen, Claudia Baumgart-Ochse, Marc von Boemcken and Ines-Jacqueline Werkner (Münster, 2015): 87–99.

over time has brought about an accumulation of partly unconnected, partly overlapping formats. The fact that some countries are members of several partnership frameworks or enjoy special-status bilateral relationships in addition to partnership illustrates these findings. NATO has largely followed the guiding principle of "new challenge – new format": it has added new formats of cooperation, but has not adapted them in the sense of regularly checking the existing partnerships for effectiveness and suitability. Just as changes in international security parameters provided the impetus for creating the partnership formats, they could just as well lead to reforms within the formats or to their termination. Given that this has not happened, the Alliance's adaptability needs to be evaluated more critically than is usually the case in the academic literature.

Different but parallel objections could be raised for the first two partnership formats. The EAPC has quite simply outlived its usefulness. In the foreseeable future, no states of the post-Soviet area will need to be brought closer to NATO and supported in reforming their security sector. The few states to which the considerations of the EAPC still apply in part (Georgia, Ukraine) or in full (Sweden, Finland), have long since been offered different forms of cooperation by the Alliance. And, for a variety of reasons, neither the MD nor the ICI have attained the aims they have pursued, namely confidence-building and enhanced intra-regional security cooperation. Here, too, NATO shows its tendency to expand its relations with individual countries of a given partnership format (Tunisia, Jordan, Qatar) by bilateralising them. There may be plausible reasons in each individual case. However, it undermines the regional multilateral approach of the original partnership frameworks. Already, regional security considerations and the partner countries' relatedness to each other no longer underpin the two most recent partnership formats.

Ultimately, the political and material efforts NATO expends on the partnership framework are not always in proportion to its gains. Since the partnerships have not met all their targets and expectations, the Alliance is faced with the question of whether it is now time to get rid of antiquated practices. However, it remains doubtful whether the Alliance can successfully take this step. After all, it has been unable to date to impose a hierarchy on its partnerships. An exception is its relationship with the European Union.

A Special Case: NATO-EU Relations

Alongside its bilateral partnerships – i.e. those with individual countries – NATO also maintains a series of special, partly institutionalised relations with the OSCE, the United Nations, the African Union, and the EU. While these are not, strictly speaking, considered part of the Alliance's partnership formats, they are nonetheless a functional component of them. As forms of cooperation, they too contribute to NATO reaching its aims quicker or better or at all.

Relations between NATO and the EU are the oldest, most substantial and at the same time the most complicated. On the one hand, both sides speak of a "strategic partnership". On the other hand, Alliance and EU representatives complain time and again that the potential for cooperation remains unused and point out that, given the far-reaching congruence of their membership, this is unsatisfactory.

The two organisations institutionalised their relations in 2001 when they established joint meetings at the ambassadorial and ministerial level. The earlier collaboration between the Alliance and the Western European Union (EU) provided the basis. In the 1990s, at the behest of European NATO members, the WEU had been extended into a pillar of Europe inside the Alliance and at the same time into a security and defence component of the EU. It was intended to take on the so-called Petersberg tasks: a specific spectrum of priorities that ranges from humanitarian and rescue tasks to crisis management, including peacemaking.

The first concrete cooperation came in 1996 when NATO declared itself willing to put its military capabilities at the disposal of the WEU (and later of the EU) for crisis-management operations carried out autonomously by Europe. This created the core of what later developed into the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). After the 2002 NATO-EU declaration on CSDP, the EU was assured access to the Alliance's planning capacities for its own military operations.[51] The Berlin-Plus agreement of March 2003 went one step further by giving the EU complete access to NATO's joint military capabilities, including the required command structures. The initial assumption was that the EU would increasingly carry out military interventions in line with its growing international security profile, for which it would require NATO support, without involving NATO as a whole.[52] Numerous institutional arrangements have since perpetuated and consolidated this cooperation.

The two organisations' agreement on cooperation was first put into practice in 2003, when the NATO-led operation for Macedonia, *Allied Harmony*, merged into the EU-led operation *Concordia*. NATO and the EU extended their cooperation beyond Europe with the cooperation in Afghanistan between ISAF and EUPOL Afghanistan, responsible for police training, and with their parallel fight against piracy around the Horn of Africa.

However, not much remains of the confidence in cooperation seen in the 1990s. This can mainly be attributed to the completely different ambition levels within the two organisations. Just over ten years ago, the EU launched an ambitious international security programme called *European Headline Goal*, whose implementation would have turned it into a power to be taken seriously in international crisis management. However, its momentum has now flagged. The EU states do not seem to have the will to enhance cooperation in this policy area, nor are the existing institutions truly used.[53] Within NATO, the reverse is true. Fifteen years ago, in light of the strategic changes in the Euro-Atlantic surroundings, it still looked both likely and politically desirable for the Alliance to assume a subordinate role to the Europeans. Since then,

51 *EU-NATO Declaration on ESDP*, 16 December 2002, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_19544.htm (accessed 19 May 2016).

52 Cf. "EU-NATO: The Framework for Permanent Relations and Berlin Plus", http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/03-11-11%20Berlin%20Plus%20press%20note%20BL.pdf (accessed 19 May 2016), and Matthias Dembinski, "Die Beziehungen zwischen NATO und EU von 'Berlin' zu 'Berlin plus'. Konzepte und Konfliktlinien", in *Die Beziehungen zwischen NATO und EU. Partnerschaft, Konkurrenz, Rivalität?*, ed. Johannes Varwick (Opladen, 2005), 61–80.

53 On this sobering evaluation, see most recently Anja Opitz, "Baujahr 1998 – rostig und ambitioniert. Die GSVP heute", *Politische Studien* 66 (2015), Themenheft no. 2: 41–48; and Michael Gahler, "Agonie trotz zunehmender Bedrohungen. Bilanz des EU-Verteidigungsgipfels 2015", *Europäische Sicherheit & Technik* 64, no. 8 (2015): 10–13.

however, Russia's revisionist foreign policy under President Putin and the advances of IS in Syria and Iraq have conferred new significance on the Alliance.[54] What makes the imbalance between the two organisations so concerning is that the cited changes in Europe's strategic environment in fact make a coordinated and complementary policy more, not less, necessary.[55]

There is one further reason for the Alliance's interest in the EU: it has more experience of partnerships as instruments of foreign and security policy. This concerns the operational dimension in particular and only to a lesser degree formal interinstitutional relations. National contingents from a great many third states have taken part in CSDP missions, thus strengthening their legitimacy and effectiveness.[56] Some of them – especially those neighbouring the Euro-Atlantic area –also collaborate with NATO in its partnership frameworks. A few other states have experience of cooperating with the EU's CSDP missions that could be interesting for NATO politically and/or militarily. Such is the case, for example, of Angola, South Africa, Malaysia or the Philippines. In future, certain non-European states – for instance, Japan – could conceivably decide to assume greater responsibility in international crisis management or to obtain experience in this field while shunning cooperation with NATO for a variety of political reasons. In this scenario, they are more likely to seek to cooperate with the EU, not least because of its civilian-military approach to crisis management. What is needed is a more detailed exchange between the two organisations about their respective partnership agendas and experiences. There are some signs that the appropriate steps are already being taken, with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg and the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, having discussed the issue in December 2015. Among other topics, they debated how better to coordinate NATO and EU activities aimed at strengthening the security sector of partner countries, especially in the Middle East and North Africa.[57]

In the past year, the NATO-EU partnership has once again attracted greater attention because two further areas of cooperation have been added to this joint effort to enhance third states' defensive capacities: the handling of so-called hybrid threats and issues of maritime cooperation. NATO already cooperates with the EU's Frontex mission, which has, since February 2016, provided reconnaissance, surveillance and observation of boat and ship movements in the Aegean Sea between Greece and Turkey. Its objective is to contain the uncontrolled movement of refugees towards Europe.[58] There are signs that the international waters off the coast of Libya may become the setting for a comparable cooperative mission. The ships, aircraft and helicopter of the EU operation EUNAVFOR Med are already monitoring the sea. Their reconnaissance results contribute to the larger picture being drawn up of the activities of people-smugglers who attempt to bring in migrants, mainly to Italy. The mission's ships are authorised to stop and search boats in international waters on suspicion of being used by smugglers. Such boats can be confiscated and diverted. It is also possible to take those suspected of people-smuggling on board a warship and hand them over to an EU member state.[59]

Additionally, following an Italian initiative, NATO has changed the mandate of its *Operation Active Endeavour*, which ran from 2001 to 2016. For 15 years, its objective was to contribute to discovering and deterring terrorist activities in the Mediterranean through surveillance of civilian sea traffic. The follow-up *Operation Sea Guardian* is providing support to maritime situational awareness and to counter-terrorism at sea, and contributing to maritime security capacity-building. By doing so it has taken on a complementary role to EUNAVFOR Med in maritime surveillance.

54 Cf. Markus Kaim, "Die NATO ist zurück. Die NATO ist die Gewinnerin der Ukraine-Krise, nicht die europäische Außenpolitik", *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*, 28 July 2015 (online), http://www.ipg-journal.de/rubriken/aussen-und-sicherheitspolitik/artikel/die-nato-ist-zurueck-1008/ (accessed 19 May 2016).

55 Within the extensive body of literature on the EU-NATO relationship, cf. Nina Graeger and John Todd, *Still a "Strategic" EU-NATO Partnership? Bridging Governance Challenges through Practical Cooperation*, PISM Policy Paper, 21 (Warsaw, 2015); and Henna Hopia, *Breaking Down the Walls. Improving EU-NATO Relations* (Brussels, 2013).

56 For a list of third-state contributions, cf. Thierry Tardy, *CSDP: Getting Third States on Board*, EUISS Issue Brief, 6/2014 (Paris, 2014), 3. On their participation in the EU's decision-making processes, see also Valentin Misteli, "EU Associates: Third-State Involvement in EU Foreign Policy Decision-Making", *European Foreign Affairs Review* 18, no. 2 (2013): 255–72.

57 Cf. *European Diplomacy & Defense*, no. 847 (2015): 4. See also Jeffrey A. Larsen, *Time to Face Reality: Priorities for NATO's 2016 Warsaw Summit*, NATO Defense College Research Paper, 126 (Rome, 2016), 14.

58 Cf. *European Diplomacy & Defense*, no. 873 (2016): 6f.

59 Cf. European External Action Service, "EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA", http://www.eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/eunavfor-med/index_en.htm (accessed 25 May 2016).

Conclusions

Even though reforming the NATO partnership frameworks will probably not play the leading role at NATO deliberations in 2017, it will nonetheless be urgent to set the course in this policy area. The issue is significant primarily because the partnerships have become relevant for almost all NATO functions and are hence a cross-sectional topic. However, institutional proliferation and path-dependent growth are also hallmarks of the partnership policy.

If NATO were to reorganise the entire tableau of partnership formats from scratch today, it would be logical to group them more clearly into different "baskets", which would give equal footing to functional necessities and the issue of shared political principles.[60] To call for institutional or political coherence may seem logical. However, it is probably unrealistic in a policy area that has grown for 25 years in accordance with varying goals and priorities and that was ultimately shaped for maximum flexibility. A wealth of political considerations makes it unlikely that NATO will "close" individual partnership frameworks. The Alliance is more likely to take into account the potential impact on the governments of the partner nations concerned – which would feel rejected – and engage in an incremental "muddling-through" in creating new partnership formats and further developing existing ones.

There is nevertheless a series of principles for a moderate reorganisation of this policy area in the next year:

First, NATO should proceed on the assumption that in the coming years partnerships with individual countries, groups of countries or organisations will increase in significance. This assumption derives from member states' increasing unwillingness to provide NATO with the necessary resources, but most of all from the domestic political change in many NATO states. Anti-integrationist and anti-globalist forces that turn their backs on international cooperation in security policy are currently very much in the ascendant. Conversely, proponents of NATO actively and forcefully shaping international relations are on the defensive. If one assumes that the Alliance's portfolio of responsibilities will at the very least remain unchanged, or even grow, in the coming years, then partnerships must be maintained and developed further so as to safeguard NATO's functionality.

Second, the governments of NATO members should keep their expectations realistic as far as any upgrading of the partnership policy or formats is concerned. Partnerships may well selectively expand NATO's possibilities for political and military action. However, it would be unrealistic to assume that they can provide lasting assistance in reducing the Alliance's own commitments or even making them entirely obsolete. After all, partner nations remain autonomous – i.e. they are free *not* to act in accordance with NATO's wishes. Moreover, governments can be replaced in office and new priorities fixed. Not least, it is likely that structural shifts will still occur within the international system in future and have an impact on NATO's partnerships.

Third, NATO should make its goals within the individual partnership frameworks clearer. At the same time, these goals should be subdivided into detailed action programmes lasting one to two years, so that the success or failure of a given approach is easier to identify. The approach that has already begun with the *Individual Partnership Action Plans* should be expanded as it is the only way of guaranteeing political momentum. Too often individual partnership activities give the impression that such momentum is lacking and that a bureaucratic perspective predominates instead.

Fourth, it is crucial that the Alliance more clearly prioritises the partnership formats politically. In light osf the changed security parameters, it is at best questionable whether NATO will deliberately externalise security in the foreseeable future by forming bonds with third states or promoting intra-regional cooperation – the factors that drove the first two waves of partnerships. However, more significance is likely to be given to the concern to enhance the Alliance's capabilities indirectly, through improved cooperation and enhanced capacity-building in other countries, so that NATO can take on tasks in international crisis

60 For a proposal on how to reorganise the partnerships institutionally, cf. Karl-Heinz Kamp and Heidi Reisinger, *NATO's Partnerships after 2014: Go West!*, NATO Defense College Research Paper, 92 (Rome, 2013), 6.

management as well as guarantee collective defence. This approach should also be reflected in its partnership policy.

This goes hand in hand with the fifth principle, the necessity to prioritise partners – some are more important to NATO than others. That may change again when the challenges change. However, the Alliance should clearly emphasise its current priorities, not to demote other partner countries, but to underline its esteem for its closest partners in cooperation and to motivate those to continue working together.

Sixth, an institutional prioritisation would also be logical. Out of the first two partnership waves, the formats that pursue a multilateral approach – in the sense of focusing on the partner nations' interconnectedness in security matters – have shown themselves to be unwieldy and not very effective. By contrast, formats which loosely group together partner countries according to their respective function for NATO, such as the two most recent frameworks, seem to be more useful for NATO, even though they are less ambitious. In essence, these formats bring together a series of bilateralisms within an overarching framework. NATO's tendency to "bilateralise" partnership formats has been perceptible since the foreign ministers' meeting in Berlin in April 2011. It suggests the right priorities and should be further consolidated.

Abbreviations

AU	African Union
CFI	Connected Forces Initiative
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DCB	Defence and related Security Capacity Building Initiative
EAPC	Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council
EOP	Enhanced Opportunities Program
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EU	European Union
EUNAVFOR Med	European Union Naval Force – Mediterranean
EUROMED	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
ICI	Istanbul Cooperation Initiative
IS	Islamic State
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JTEC	NATO-Georgian Joint Training and Evaluation Centre
MAP	Membership Action Plan
MD	Mediterranean Dialogue
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NACC	North Atlantic Cooperation Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NORDEFCO	Nordic Defence Cooperation
NRF	NATO Response Force
NTM-I	NATO Training Mission-Iraq
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PATG	Partners Across the Globe
PfP	Partnership for Peace
PII	Partnership Interoperability Initiative
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
SNGP	Substantial NATO-Georgia Package
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
VJTF	Very High Readiness Joint Task Force
WEU	Western European Union
WMD	Weapons of mass destruction